

LEWISHAM PARENT PARTNERSHIP SERVICE

TRANSFER TO SECONDARY SCHOOL CHILDREN WITH STATEMENTS

Choosing a secondary school for your child to attend can be a daunting and difficult decision for any parent, but for parents of children with special educational needs the decision can be even more difficult as there are so many other things to consider. Parents often ask 'Where do I start?' or 'Which is the best school?' Only you as parents can make the decision about which school you would like your child to attend, but this information sheet aims to provide information and helpful hints about the transition to secondary school for your child.

Children with statements

If your child has a Statement of Special Educational Needs then the transfer to secondary school will be coordinated by the Special Educational Needs & Disability Team.

If you wish for your child to attend a Church school or selective school then you will still have to apply directly to those schools, a Statement does not give your child an automatic place at these types of schools.

Start Early

At your child's Annual Review in year 5 you should start discussing which type of school you would like your child to attend. The professionals involved in your child's education might feel that there are important factors you need to consider when choosing a secondary school for your child and they may even make recommendations about the type of school your child needs.

If you have concerns about secondary schools for your child you should use this opportunity to discuss them and speak to the professionals involved about any concerns or questions you have.

Visiting schools

Most secondary schools will have Open/Days/Evenings when you will have a chance to visit the school and find out what they can offer for your child.

These Open Days are general admission and therefore you might not have chance to discuss your individual child or speak to the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO).

After attending the Open Days it is important that you visits schools again and meet with the SENCO, so that you can discuss your child's individual needs and whether or not the school would be suitable for your child. You should not let the experiences of other people you know influence your decision. What worked for another child might not be suitable for your child and because another child had a bad experience does not mean that it will be the same for your child.

When meeting with the SENCO you should take a copy of your child's Statement and any other information that you think would be useful.

When you visit school be sure to take notes about what you see and write down anything that you think would benefit your child if attending that school. If you take notes you will have something to refer back to when you have visited all the schools of your choice.

Which school?

When you have finished visiting schools you should then look at each school and your notes about what would be suitable for your child.

If you would like your child to attend a Local Authority maintained school then you should inform the Education Officer as soon as possible of your preference.

The SEN Code of Practice states:

Parents may express a preference for the maintained school (but not a PRU or hospital special school) they wish their child to attend, or make representations for a placement in any other school. LEAs must comply with a parental preference unless the school is unsuitable to the child's age, ability, aptitude or special educational needs, or the placement would be incompatible with the efficient parental representations and arrange any meeting(s) with LEA advisers or officers the parents seek, before issuing the final statement.

This simply means that if you want your child to attend a Local Authority Maintained Secondary School, the SEN & Disability Team must name this school in your child's Statement as long as the school can meet your child's needs and will not be an inefficient use of resources i.e. does not cost more than another school that would also meet your child's needs.

If you want your child to attend a Church school or a non-maintained school, this includes selective schools and independent schools then you will need to apply directly to these schools as well as informing the Education Officer of your choice. Your child's Statement will not automatically get your child a place at a Church school or a non-maintained school but if you feel that there are important factors that mean your child should attend this school then you should include this in your application and also inform the Education Officer why you feel this school is suitable.

If your child is allocated a place at the school of your choice it is now important that you start planning your child's transition to this school and how this will be managed.

Year 6 Annual Review

The Year 6 Annual Review should review your child's statement but should also look at your child's transition to secondary school and any changes in support that might be needed. The SENCO from the secondary school your child will be attending should be invited; this will be an opportunity for the SENCO to meet the professionals involved in your child's education and to start the transition to secondary school for your child.

Following this meeting you might want to prepare a plan of action or agreed action for your child's transfer to secondary school including details about support to be provided and opportunities for your child to visit his/her new school before the transfer in September.

Following the year 6 Annual review the Education Officer must amend your child's statement to name the school that they will transfer to. The SEN code of practice states that your child's statement must be amended by 15th February during the year in which they transfer. For example, if your child will start secondary school in September 2012 then their statement must be amended to name the new secondary school by 15th February 2012.

Appealing for a school

If your child is not allocated a place at the school of your choice then you can appeal to the Special Educational Needs & Disability Tribunal (SENDIST). This is different from the admissions appeal panel and you can only appeal to SENDIST about the choice of school if your child has a statement.

If your child has a statement you must not appeal to the admissions appeal panel. SENDIST deal with all appeals for children with statements.

For further information about SENDIST and how to appeal you can contact Parent Partnership Service on 0208 695 5955 or contact SEND on 01325 392 760 to request a 'How to Appeal' booklet. Or follow the link below.

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/global/forms/hmcts/tribunals/send/index.htm>

Checklist

(Use this for ideas, or draw up your own)

- How is the SEN provision organised in the school?
- What range of needs does the school meet? Can the school offer the provision your child needs? What kind of help would your child receive?
- Is the school's SEN support an important part of the school? Are there other professionals based in the school? (Eg therapists, outreach services)
- How much support does the school get from other professionals? Eg how often is the school visited by the speech therapist, educational psychologist or autism outreach service?
- If relevant to your child, ask about medical/personal hygiene support
- Will your child miss certain parts of the curriculum because of their special needs? How flexible will the school be with this? What lessons do students miss to receive extra help?
- What teaching methods are used? How long are the lessons and are support materials provided? Are there long periods of dictation or copying?
- How are tasks adapted for those children who may have difficulty concentrating or writing for long periods? Are there individual learning programmes?
- How much homework is expected? What happens if my child has trouble recording the homework or understanding what is to be done?
- Will the secondary school SENCO attend the year 6 annual review?
- What learning support and classroom assistance would be made available to your child and how often? If your child has Learning Support Assistant, what arrangements will be made for your child if the LSA is not in school?
- What specialist facilities, equipment and resources does the school use for SEN?
- What arrangements are made for school exams, tests and SATs? Does the school offer GCSEs or another programme of external examinations? Does the school make use of concessions for exams such as extra time or providing a laptop or scribe if needed?
- How many children have special needs similar to your child's? How many teachers there offer specialist support? If there is a larger number it will suggest that there is a great deal of support available and that your child's difficulties will not be misunderstood or looked down on by staff or other students.
- How do SEN staff liaise with subject teachers and year tutors about individual children? What about lunchtime staff?
- How does the school's discipline system adapt to take account of the specific needs and difficulties of children? Is positive behaviour praised?
- What behaviour management programmes are in operation? Is there a planned programme to help build self-esteem? If so, what is it?
- Are all staff briefed on potential triggers for outbursts by children? What plans are in place if an incident occurs in class?
- Are there quiet areas where children can go if they become stressed or anxious? Are there distraction-free work areas?

- Is there a buddy system or peer support where an older child helps a younger child within the school?
- Is there a learning mentor system in the school that could be used for your child if they need it? How does it work?
- What is the school's policy on bullying? How are children taught to deal with bullying and teasing? If a child has behaviour difficulties, how would they respond to this?
- How does the school link with parents? How will the school communicate with you about your child and his/her progress? Eg do parents take part in drawing up and implementing Individual Educational Plans, are parents invited to reviews, is there a parents group or coffee morning?
- What extra activities are offered at lunch time or after school? What are the play or recreational facilities like? What are the supervision arrangements?
- Are there any after school activities/trips/holidays and how would your child access these?
- Does the school assess all children on admission to see what level they are at? How do they assess them? What do they do once they have the results?
- Are there any extra-curricular activities linked to SEN such as signing classes for non-hearing impaired children? How do they work to help communication between children with hearing impairments and those without?
- Does the school have links with any other school? In the case of a special school, is there a possibility of partial or full inclusion/reintegration with a local mainstream school?
- What ICT provision is available?
- Is there a member of staff who is trained...(e.g. deal with epileptic seizures, help your child during PE etc?)
- Are all areas of the school accessible to my child? If not, could adaptations be made or would other arrangements be necessary?
- What provision is made for special diets?
- What arrangements are made for giving medicines and inhalers? What happens if your child is ill in school time?
- If your child will need transport to school, ask for information on this
- What induction programme does the school have in the summer term before they start secondary? Could extra visits be arranged for your child? What could the school do to ease transition?
- Other things to consider –
 - Do you feel welcome?
 - Do the children look comfortable?
 - If your child has any particular religious needs, would they be met?
 - Do the classrooms look like places where children can learn?
 - Does the school look under control?
 - Does the school celebrate different cultures/religions?
 - Are the displays current and interesting and do they seem to include students of all abilities?

Further information

Lewisham Admissions Team 0208 314 8282

Lewisham SEN Team 0208 314 7453

Advisory Centre for Education (ACE): www.ace-ed.org.uk

Advice line: 0808 800 5793.

Parent Partnership Service: Independent information, advice and support for parents of children with Special Educational Needs. Contact details below: